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ANALYZING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNICATION FACTORS AND TIKTOK-BASED KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION FOR THE YOUNG GENERATION OF SHENZHEN IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between communication factors and knowledge dissemination through short videos on TikTok among users in Shenzhen, China. The research focuses on four main objectives: (1) to explore the relationship between communication topic credibility and popularity with knowledge dissemination, (2) to analyze the relationship between content quality and interactivity with knowledge dissemination, (3) to explore the relationship between platform convenience and uniqueness with knowledge dissemination, and (4) to explore the relationship between audience preference and demand satisfaction with knowledge dissemination. A structured questionnaire was administered to a convenience sample of TikTok users, which yielded 424 valid responses. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationships between communication factors and knowledge dissemination.

The results show significant positive correlations across all dimensions. The credibility and popularity of communication topics showed strong correlations with cognitive (.394) and behavioral (.375) effects. Content quality and interactivity showed high correlations with all three levels, especially with the cognitive (.374) and behavioral (.354) outcomes. Platform convenience (.404) and uniqueness (.313) significantly influenced cognitive engagement, while audience preference and satisfaction with demand also contributed positively to all transfer effects, especially to the cognitive (.323) and psychological (.290) dimensions.

Keywords: TikTok Application, Disseminate Knowledge, Shenzhen Young Generation

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology and the widespread use of social media platforms have dramatically changed the traditional methods of knowledge dissemination. In the digital age, people are increasingly relying on online platforms to access information, replacing books, newspapers and other traditional media with dynamic, interactive and easily consumable formats. Among these platforms, TikTok has become a globally recognized short video application that significantly influences the way knowledge is communicated. With its unique combination of brevity, creativity and user interactivity, TikTok is an important tool for the dissemination of knowledge, especially among younger generations immersed in digital media. Unlike traditional formats, TikTok's knowledge dissemination model condenses complex information into engaging and visually appealing short videos that make learning more accessible and enjoyable (Zhang, 2024). This shift highlights the need to examine the role of TikTok in reshaping the way knowledge is consumed and its wider impact on education and society.

TikTok's knowledge dissemination model leverages its unique algorithm and social media capabilities to drive user engagement and content personalization. Through a sophisticated recommendation system, TikTok tailors content to individual preferences and ensures that users are exposed to knowledge that matches their interests and behavioral patterns (Nasiri, 2021). This innovative approach not only improves the efficiency of knowledge delivery, but also encourages greater user engagement through features such as comments, likes and content sharing, creating a collaborative and interactive learning environment. TikTok's ability to transcend geographical and temporal barriers also makes it a powerful tool for global knowledge dissemination, enabling users from diverse backgrounds to access and share knowledge anytime, anywhere. The platform's unique ability to transform knowledge into short, entertaining and easily digestible formats is particularly attractive to younger audiences who prefer to learn through engaging and visually dynamic media (Li, 2023).

However, despite its potential, the TikTok-based model of knowledge dissemination is not without its challenges. The brevity of the short videos can limit the depth and complexity of the knowledge being shared, which could compromise the quality and accuracy of the content. Furthermore, as TikTok is primarily an entertainment platform, users may prioritize funny or sensational content over educational material, reducing the effectiveness

of knowledge transfer in certain contexts. Risks related to misinformation, content moderation and ethical concerns further complicate the use of TikTok as a knowledge dissemination tool (Yun, 2020). Understanding these challenges is crucial to maximize the potential of this medium while minimizing its drawbacks.

This study investigates the relationship between key communication factors — such as credibility of the communication topic, quality of the content, usability of the platform, and audience preferences — and the dissemination of knowledge through TikTok among the young generation in Shenzhen. The aim of the research is to find out how these factors influence the effectiveness of knowledge dissemination and user engagement in a digital, fast-paced environment. It also aims to understand the impact of TikTok's knowledge sharing model on users' cognitive, psychological and behavioral outcomes to provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating its broader societal impact.

The significance of this research is that it sheds light on how TikTok's innovative approach to knowledge dissemination meets the evolving needs of digital media users. By exploring the underlying contexts of TikTok's knowledge distribution model, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of social media in reshaping education, learning and information dissemination in the digital age. The findings will also provide valuable insights for educators, policy makers, and content creators seeking to optimize the use of digital platforms for knowledge dissemination and create an environment that fosters effective learning and meaningful engagement in an increasingly digital society.

Research Objective

1. To examine the relationship between the credibility of the communication topic and the popularity of the communication topic and the dissemination of knowledge through short videos on TikTok.

2. To analyze the relationship between the quality of the content and the interactivity of the content and the dissemination of knowledge through short videos on TikTok.

3. To investigate the relationship between the platform, ease of use and uniqueness of the platform and the dissemination of knowledge through short videos on TikTok.

4. To explore the relationship between the degree of audience preference and demand satisfaction and the dissemination of knowledge through short videos on TikTok.

Conceptual Framework

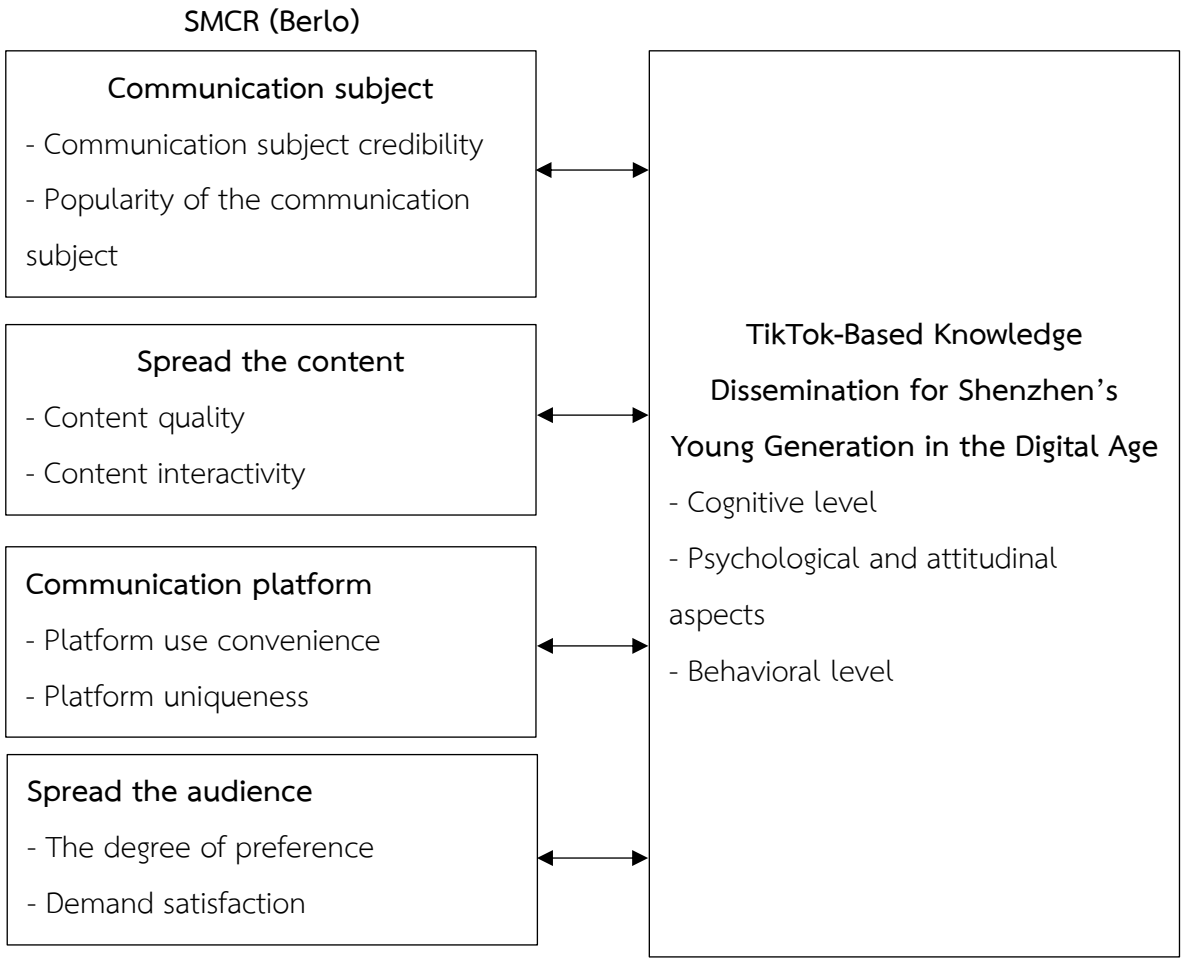

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Literature Review

SMCR (Berlo)

The SMCR model, developed by David Kenneth Berlo, provides a basic framework for understanding communication that can be adapted to include specific dimensions, as seen in the revised framework. The source, or the communication subject, emphasizes factors such as credibility and popularity that influence how the audience perceives and trusts the message (Al-Maroof et al., 2021). The message or content emphasizes quality and interactivity, ensuring that it is clear, engaging and meets the needs of the audience to encourage meaningful responses (Alhumaid, 2020). The channel, redefined as the communication platform, focuses on convenience and uniqueness, as these attributes increase the effectiveness of the medium chosen to deliver the message, whether through social media or other tools. Finally, the

receiver or audience emphasizes the degree of preference and need satisfaction, with the audience's background, expectations and preferences influencing how the message is interpreted and how it is responded to. This integrated approach reinforces the original SMCR model by aligning source credibility, message quality, platform appropriateness, and audience engagement to create a coherent communication process that promotes effective information dissemination, relationship building, and the achievement of communication goals (Al-Maroof et al., 2021; Alhumaid, 2020; Li, 2023).

Disseminate Knowledge

The concept of knowledge dissemination involves the strategic transfer of information, knowledge and expertise in order to achieve certain cognitive, psychological and behavioral effects on the target groups. At the cognitive level, knowledge dissemination aims to improve understanding, raise awareness and promote critical thinking by providing relevant and clear content tailored to the needs of the target audience (Alhumaid, 2021). At the psychological and attitudinal level, the aim is to influence perceptions, attitudes and emotional responses to ensure that the information aligns with the audience's values and motivates engagement. At the behavioral level, effective dissemination promotes actionable outcomes, such as adopting new practices, supporting informed decisions, and encouraging active participation. Achieving these multidimensional effects requires interactive strategies, the use of innovative digital platforms such as TikTok, and overcoming challenges such as information overload, barriers to access and misinformation risks. By utilizing such approaches, stakeholders can empower individuals, promote inclusive education and drive societal progress while cultivating a culture of continuous learning and knowledge sharing (Zhaoying, 2021; Han, 2020; Liu, 2020).

TikTok

TikTok, a leading social media platform, has transformed digital engagement through its unique approach to short-form video content, algorithm-driven personalization and community-centric interactions. Central to TikTok's theory of concept is its advanced algorithm that curates personalized content through the "For You" feed, improving discoverability and driving global virality (Mhalla, 2022). The platform's focus on short-form creativity, limited to videos up to 60 seconds in length, encourages creators to innovate storytelling, supported by a range of editing tools and effects (Yun, 2020). TikTok’s viral challenges and trends play a crucial role in shaping pop culture and fashion, offering brands and artists the opportunity to showcase and engage. The platform fosters a collaborative environment through interactive

features such as duets and stitches that encourage user engagement and community building (Nasiri, 2020). In addition, influencer marketing has become a staple, allowing brands to connect with younger demographics through partnerships with artists who influence trends and consumer behavior. By utilizing these principles, TikTok users can effectively engage in the platform's dynamic social media landscape (Ayoubi, 2020).

Research Methodology

1. Population and Samples: The population of this study includes TikTok users in Shenzhen, China. Given the large and uncountable size of the population, it was not possible to determine the exact number of users. Therefore, the sample size was determined using the Yamane sample size calculation formula, which is suitable for populations of unknown or infinite size. To obtain the sample, a random sampling method was used, targeting users who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. A total of 441 questionnaires were initially collected. After sorting out the responses that did not meet the criteria, 424 valid questionnaires remained, representing a response rate of 96.14%.

2. Research Instruments: The research instruments consist of a structured questionnaire developed to investigate users' perceptions and behaviors towards knowledge-based videos on TikTok. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections based on the variables of the study. The first section collected demographic information, including gender, age, and occupation, as shown in Table 1. The second section captured communication factors such as the topic of communication, content quality, platform usability, and audience preferences on a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The statistical results for these variables, including their means and opinion levels, are summarized in Table 2. The third section focused on the effects of knowledge short videos, assessing cognitive, psychological and behavioral levels (see Table 3).

3. Data Analysis Methods: Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and to analyze the levels of communication factors and transmission effects. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's correlation coefficient, were used to examine the relationships between the communication factors (e.g., credibility, content quality, platform usability) and the transmission effects (cognitive, psychological, and behavioral levels) of knowledge short videos on TikTok.

Research Results

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of respondents

Personal Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
- Male	193	45.64
- Female	231	54.36
Age		
- Under the age of 18	20	4.72
- 18-23 Years old	175	41.39
- 24-30 Years old	125	29.60
- 31-40 Years old	104	17.22
Occupation		
- Student	105	24.76
- State-owned enterprises / public institutions	73	17.22
- Private / private / individual property owner	132	31.13
- Professional	114	26.89
Total	424	100.00

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by personal factors, including gender, age and occupation. In terms of gender, the sample consists of 193 males (45.64%) and 231 females (54.36%), indicating a slightly higher proportion of female respondents. In terms of age, the largest group with 175 respondents (41.39%) is between 18 and 23 years old, followed by 24to 30 year olds with 125 respondents (29.60%), 31to 40 year olds with 104 respondents (17.22%) and under 18 year olds, who form the smallest group with 20 respondents (4.72%). In terms of occupation, private individuals or owners of private property form the largest category with 132 respondents (31.13%), followed by professionals with 114 respondents (26.89%), students with 105 respondents (24.76%) and employees of state-owned companies or public institutions with 73 respondents (17.22%).

Table 2. Statistical analysis of factors influencing the transmission effect of knowledge short videos

Indicators	Secondary indicators	Mean	Opinion Level
Communication subject	Communication subject credibility	3.62	High
	Popularity of the communication subject	3.70	

Table 2. Statistical analysis of factors influencing the transmission effect of knowledge short videos (Cont.)

Indicators	Secondary indicators	Mean	Opinion Level
Spread the content	Content quality	3.57	High
	Content interactivity	3.60	
Communication platform	Platform use convenience	3.66	High
	Platform uniqueness	3.60	
Spread the audience	The degree of preference	3.61	High
	Demand satisfaction	3.58	

Table 2 The statistical analysis shows that knowledge transfer in short videos is influenced by four primary factors, with all indicators showing a high level of opinion. The communication subject emerged as the most significant factor, with the secondary indicator "popularity of the communication topic" achieving the highest mean score (mean = 3.70), closely followed by the convenience of platform use (mean = 3.66) and the credibility of the communication topic (mean = 3.62). In contrast, the quality of content had the lowest mean score of all secondary indicators (mean = 3.57), followed by satisfaction with demand (mean = 3.58).

Table 3. Statistical analysis table of the transmission effect of knowledge short videos

Indicators	Secondary indicators	Mean	Opinion Level
Communication effect	Cognitive level	3.50	High
	Psychological and attitudinal aspects	3.49	High
	Behavioral level	3.48	High

Table 3 the statistical analysis of the effects of knowledge short video communication shows a graded effect across all psychological dimensions, with the cognitive level having the highest mean score (mean = 3.50), closely followed by psychological and attitudinal aspects (mean = 3.49) and the behavioral level (mean = 3.48).

Table 4. The correlation analysis examines the relationship between communication subject factors and their effects on knowledge transmission in short videos

Communication subject	Transmission effect of knowledge short videos		
	Cognitive level	Psychological and attitudinal aspects	Behavioral level
Communication subject credibility	.394*** (p-value = .000)	.359*** (p-value = .000)	.369*** (p-value = .000)
Popularity of the communication subject	.398*** (p-value = .000)	.365*** (p-value = .000)	.375*** (p-value = .000)

*** Statistically significant level of .001

Table 4, Credibility correlates moderately with cognitive (r = 0.394), psychological (r = 0.359), and behavioral (r = 0.369) dimensions, while popularity correlates somewhat more strongly with cognitive (r = 0.398), psychological (r = 0.365), and behavioral (r = 0.375) levels. Both factors significantly improve knowledge transfer, with all p-values < 0.001.

Table 5 The correlation analysis examines the relationship between spreading the content factors and their effects on knowledge transmission in short videos

Spread the content	Transmission effect of knowledge short videos		
	Cognitive level	Psychological and attitudinal aspects	Behavioral level
Content quality	.374*** (p-value = .000)	.348*** (p-value = .000)	.347*** (p-value = .000)
Content interactivity	.361*** (p-value = .000)	.332*** (p-value = .000)	.354*** (p-value = .000)

*** Statistically significant level of .001

Table 5, Content quality shows moderate correlations with cognitive (r = 0.374), psychological (r = 0.348), and behavioral (r = 0.347) aspects, while content interactivity is similarly correlated with cognitive (r = 0.361), psychological (r = 0.332), and behavioral (r = 0.354) dimensions. All correlations are statistically significant at the 0.001 level, underscoring

the critical roles of quality and interactivity in enhancing the effectiveness of knowledge transmission in short video content.

Table 6. The correlation analysis examines the relationship between communication platform factors and their effects on knowledge transmission in short videos

Communication platform	Transmission effect of knowledge short videos		
	Cognitive level	Psychological and attitudinal aspects	Behavioral level
Platform use convenience	.404*** (p-value = .000)	.350*** (p-value = .000)	.336*** (p-value = .000)
Platform uniqueness	.313*** (p-value = .000)	.269*** (p-value = .000)	.270*** (p-value = .000)

*** Statistically significant level of .001

Table 6, Platform use convenience shows the strongest correlations, with cognitive (r = 0.404), psychological (r = 0.350), and behavioral (r = 0.336) levels, all statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Platform uniqueness has moderate but weaker correlations with cognitive (r = 0.313), psychological (r = 0.269), and behavioral (r = 0.270) levels, also significant at the 0.001 level. These findings emphasize that convenience plays a more substantial role than uniqueness in facilitating knowledge transmission through short video platforms.

Table 7. The correlation analysis examines the relationship between spreading the audience factors and their effects on knowledge transmission in short videos

Spread the audience	Transmission effect of knowledge short videos		
	Cognitive level	Psychological and attitudinal aspects	Behavioral level
The degree of preference	.322*** (p-value = .000)	.270*** (p-value = .000)	.242*** (p-value = .000)
Demand satisfaction	.323*** (p-value = .000)	.290*** (p-value = .000)	.275*** (p-value = .000)

*** Statistically significant level of .001

Table 7, The degree of preference has moderate correlations with cognitive (r = 0.322), psychological (r = 0.270), and behavioral (r = 0.242) levels, all statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Demand satisfaction exhibits slightly stronger correlations with cognitive (r = 0.323), psychological (r = 0.290), and behavioral (r = 0.275) levels, also significant at the 0.001 level. These findings indicate that demand satisfaction has a slightly greater influence than the degree of preference on audience engagement and knowledge transmission through short videos.

Table 8. The summary of hypotheses testing

Indicators	Secondary indicators	Transmission effect of knowledge short videos		
		Cognitive level	Psychological and attitudinal aspects	Behavioral level
Communication subject	Communication subject credibility	.394***	.359***	.369***
	Popularity of the communication subject	.398***	.365***	.375***
Spread the content	Content quality	.374***	.348***	.347***
	Content interactivity	.361***	.332***	.354***
Communication platform	Platform use convenience	.404***	.350***	.336***
	Platform uniqueness	.313***	.269***	.270***
Spread the audience	The degree of preference	.322***	.270***	.242***
	Demand satisfaction	.323***	.290***	.275***

*** Statistically significant level of .001

Discussions

The results of this study shed light on the effectiveness of TikTok's knowledge dissemination model and its alignment with the SMCR (Berlo) framework. The results show significant correlations between communication factors — such as credibility of the communication topic, quality of content, interactivity and usability of the platform — and the transmission effects across cognitive, psychological and behavioral dimensions. This supports

the premise of the SMCR model, which emphasizes the importance of source credibility, message clarity, channel effectiveness, and audience engagement in achieving successful communication outcomes (Al-Maroof et al., 2021). The high correlation between communication subjects' credibility and cognitive effects (.394***) suggests that trustworthy creators enhance users' knowledge acquisition, confirming Li and Zhang's (2021) findings on the central role of credible sources in digital knowledge sharing. However, challenges remain, as some creators prioritize entertainment over accuracy, which could diminish the educational value of their content. To address this issue, authors should strike a balance between engaging formats and accurate and reliable information to maintain trust and authenticity.

Content quality and interactivity also showed strong correlations with all transfer effects, with content interactivity showing a particularly notable impact on behavioral outcomes (.354***). This highlights the importance of dynamic and engaging content for user engagement and supports Nasiri's (2020) assertion that interactive features significantly enhance digital learning experiences. Nevertheless, the fragmented nature of short videos on TikTok limits comprehensive understanding, as noted by Zhang (2022), who argued that fragmented content often lacks depth, leading to superficial knowledge retention. To mitigate this, TikTok authors should consider organizing content into coherent series or collections to promote systematic learning, while the platform itself could facilitate features such as content playlists or sequential viewing options.

Platform usability, particularly convenience (.404***) and uniqueness (.313***), also played a critical role in users’ cognitive and behavioral engagement. These findings underscore the role of the channel within the SMCR framework, where the efficiency and accessibility of the medium are critical to effective messaging. Improved platform features, such as enhanced search functions or personalized content recommendations, could further optimize the user experience and enhance the transmission effects of knowledge content. However, the behavioral effects showed the weakest correlations compared to the cognitive and psychological dimensions, suggesting that although users consume and internalize content, they only actively participate to a relatively small extent, for example by sharing or discussing knowledge—. This is in line with Mhalla's (2022) observation that stronger interactive features are needed to encourage users to take action. Improving TikTok’s interactive capabilities, such as Q&A sessions, live discussions and collaborative challenges, could encourage deeper engagement and create a community-oriented environment for knowledge sharing.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the applicability of the SMCR model for understanding the knowledge dissemination mechanism of TikTok. By addressing the challenges related to content quality, interactivity, and platform coherence, TikTok can strengthen its role as an educational platform and effectively promote the cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral impacts on the young users in Shenzhen. These findings provide actionable recommendations for both the creators and developers of the platform to optimize digital knowledge sharing and support impactful learning experiences in the digital age.

The new body of Knowledge found in this study

This study promotes the application of the SMCR model (Berlo) in the context of digital knowledge dissemination, particularly on TikTok. The results show that the credibility and popularity of communication subjects are crucial factors influencing cognitive and psychological engagement and emphasize the importance of trustworthy and likable authors for effective knowledge transfer. Furthermore, the study emphasizes that content quality and interactivity play a central role in improving cognitive understanding and psychological engagement. This extends the "message" component of the SMCR model to include the dynamic and participatory nature of modern social media. This demonstrates that interactive content is not only important to captivate users, but also to encourage knowledge acquisition and resonance.

Platform usability, particularly convenience and uniqueness, were found to be important factors in enhancing cognitive and behavioral engagement, highlighting the importance of the "channel" component within the SMCR model. While behavioral effects showed weaker correlations compared to cognitive and psychological dimensions, the study highlights the need for enhanced interactive features, such as question and answer rounds or content playlists, to encourage active participation. These findings extend the theoretical understanding of the SMCR model by incorporating contemporary digital media dynamics and provide practical insights for content creators and platform developers to optimize knowledge sharing practices on social media platforms.

Recommendation

1. Enhancing creator credibility and the quality of content: Content creators on TikTok should focus on producing accurate, well-researched and engaging knowledge-based content. By maintaining a balance between entertainment and educational value, creators can build

user trust and improve both cognitive and psychological engagement. Training programs or guidelines for authors could be developed to emphasize the importance of credibility and factual accuracy in the dissemination of knowledge.

2. Improve interactivity and behavioral engagement: TikTok should introduce additional interactive features, such as live Q&A, content playlists, and collaborative challenges, to encourage active participation and deeper engagement with knowledge-based content. These features can help bridge the gap between psychological engagement and behavioral activation and foster a stronger sense of community among users.

3. Optimizing the usability of the knowledge sharing platform: The platform could increase its usability by improving search features and offering curated collections or a series of knowledge content. Personalized recommendations based on users' interests and preferences should be further refined to support systematic and coherent learning experiences.

4. Overcoming the challenges of fragmented content: To mitigate the limitations of short video formats, creators and TikTok could work together to develop content series or playlists that allow users to explore topics in greater depth. This approach would help users develop a broader understanding of complex topics and overcome the superficiality often associated with short video content.

5. Promote media literacy and content moderation: TikTok and stakeholders should promote media literacy among users so that they can critically assess the credibility and accuracy of knowledge content. In addition, stricter content moderation guidelines should be enforced to curb the spread of misinformation and ensure the integrity of educational content on the platform.

Future Research

1. Research into long-term learning outcomes: Future research should investigate the long-term impact of TikTok’s knowledge dissemination model on user learning retention and practical application. This includes assessing whether the knowledge gained through short videos translates into meaningful behavior change over time.

2. Evaluate the platform features: Further studies could evaluate the effectiveness of newly introduced features, such as interactive tools or content series, in improving engagement and knowledge retention. This would provide valuable feedback for optimizing the usability of the platform for educational purposes.

3. Comparative studies across platforms: Research could also compare TikTok's knowledge dissemination model with other social media platforms to identify best practices and key differentiators in promoting effective learning.

4. Investigate cultural and demographic influences: Future studies should examine how cultural and demographic factors influence user preferences, engagement, and learning outcomes on TikTok. This would provide insights into the customization of content and strategies for different user groups.

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